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FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7112  
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1083  
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 2451  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9048  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 8499  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 7401  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1431  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 002224

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: STRIKES CONTINUE AS OPPOSITION PRESSES FOR REFORMS

REF: DHAKA 2207

Classified By: Pol Econ Counselor D.C. MCCULLOUGH, Reason(s): 1.4 (d)

¶1. (SBU) On April 20, the Awami League led 14 party opposition, held its dawn to dusk hartal throughout the country. As of 1600 local, the hartal was widely observed, with a number of AL supporters seen throughout Dhaka enforcing the hartal. As normal, government owned buses operated, as did privately owned rickshaws, but most of the city's shopping malls, educational institutions and small stores remained closed.

¶2. (SBU) In Dhaka, there were scattered outbreaks of violence: an empty bus was set ablaze in a suburb of Dhaka, elsewhere police arrested 20 opposition activists, and in central downtown Dhaka police used teargas to disperse picketers. In Chittagong, Rajshahi, and Khulna the hartal was widely observed and peaceful although in Barisal observers report that police and opposition have clashed, with minor injuries reported.

¶3. (C) Asked if opposition public demonstrations are gaining public support, BNP MP and Whip Razaul Bari Dina replied negatively, and told poloff, "It's not the right way to express yourself, we have Parliament and not the street." He discounted reports of the strike being more widely observed than in the past.

¶4. (C) Awami League Presidium Member Muhamed Mansur Ahmed told poloff that the AL is "spontaneously" gaining public support for its reform demands, especially after April 19's attempted sit-in at the Prime Minister's Office, which "shut down" that part of the city. Asked if the dialogue with the BNP/JI was still possible, he said that the AL has reservations working with the fundamentalist Jamaat Islami partly because of their connections with the terrorist group Jamaatul Mujahedin Bangladesh, and partly because the AL's 14 party alliance partners have problems working with JI.

¶5. (SBU) According to reports, the AL plans another country-wide hartal on Sunday, April 23, to press its demands for the government to accept electoral and caretaker government reforms.

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